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ABSTRACT

Provided in three sections is a presentation on providing services to identify, assess, and develop intervention strategies for mildly handicaped students in the regular classroom. Section I provides a definition of an educational strategist, and background information on the referral system and program in Iowa. Covered in Section II are the people a diagnostician may want to talk to when processing a referral, the information gathering process, areas to consider when analyzing a student's difficulties, and suggestions (such as prompting, grouping within the classroom, and taping reading assignments and tests) requiring minimal modification of the standard classroom program. A third section contains two brief case studies. A sample pre-referral screening data sheet is appended. (SBH)

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FORMULATING INTERVENTION STRATEGIES TO MAINTAIN THE MILDLY HANDICAPPED STUDENT IN THE REGULAR CLASSROOM

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Educational Strategists

Area Education Agency 7

Interdisciplinary

Workshop Format

EC100730

This paper was presented in a workshop format at the 55th International Council for Exceptional Children Convention held April 11-15, 1977, in Atlanta, Georgia.

The presentation was made in three sections. Section I consisted of an overview of the presentation, a definition of a strategist, an explanation of the referral system, and background information. Section II consisted of Who to See, Where to Look, What to Look For and What to Do when forming intervention strategies. Section III consisted of a discussion of strategies for the students by the presentors and the participants.

Transparencies were used to enhance the presentation and to focus the participants attention on various points stressed by the presentors.

SECTION I

Definition of an Educational Strategist

Educational Strategists are special education personnel who offer assistance to the general classroom teacher. The strategist provides services to identify, assess, and develop intervention strategies for pupils who are mildly handicapped.

Background Data

The Referral System

When a concern is expressed and before the educational strategist works with a student, the teacher is asked to fill out a Pre-Referral Screening Sheet as found in the Appendix. The purpose of the screening sheet is five fold. First it helps the teacher focus in on the problems more closely. Second, the Pre-Referral Screening Sheet helps the teacher look for good points in the student. Third, it provides background information that may be useful when forming a diagnosis. Fourth, it helps the teacher and strategist determine if the concern can be handled informally by the teacher in the classroom with support from the strategist or if a formal referral is necessary so more extensive testing can be done to determine the cause of the problem. Fifth, it is a reference for the strategist.

A formal referral requires the signature of the parent(s) giving their permission for testing. On an informal referral the strategist does not work directly with the child. Instead, the strategist gives suggestions for the teacher to initiate in the classroom.

After all the information has been collected and analyzed by the strategist a staffing is held to share information and determine goals and objectives for the child. Those present at a staffing usually include the parent(s), teacher, principal, psychologist, strategist and sometimes the student. In our area the strategist and the psychologist are paired as a team to gather diagnostic information. Other resource personnel may also be present at the staffing when their information is pertinent to the staffing.

It becomes the task of the strategist to help the teacher implement any changes necessary to maintain the mildly handicapped student in the regular classroom and to follow-up on the student at intervals.

Background Information

The State of Iowa is divided into 15 Area Education Agencies. Each area provides support services to the local school districts within their area.

In Area Education Agency 7 (AEA 7) there are 12 strategists at present. This program is to be expanded to include more strategists in the future. Each strategist serves approximately 3,000 students and 150 teachers. Of these students about 3% are currently being served. The strategist serves an extremely diverse student population of handicapping conditions including the slow learner, the mildly disturbed, and the physically handicapped.

The Educational Strategist works with the Psychologist as a team in our area to gather diagnostic information concerning a student. This team concept gives a "total look" when dealing with student problems.

WHO TO SEE

WHERE TO LOOK

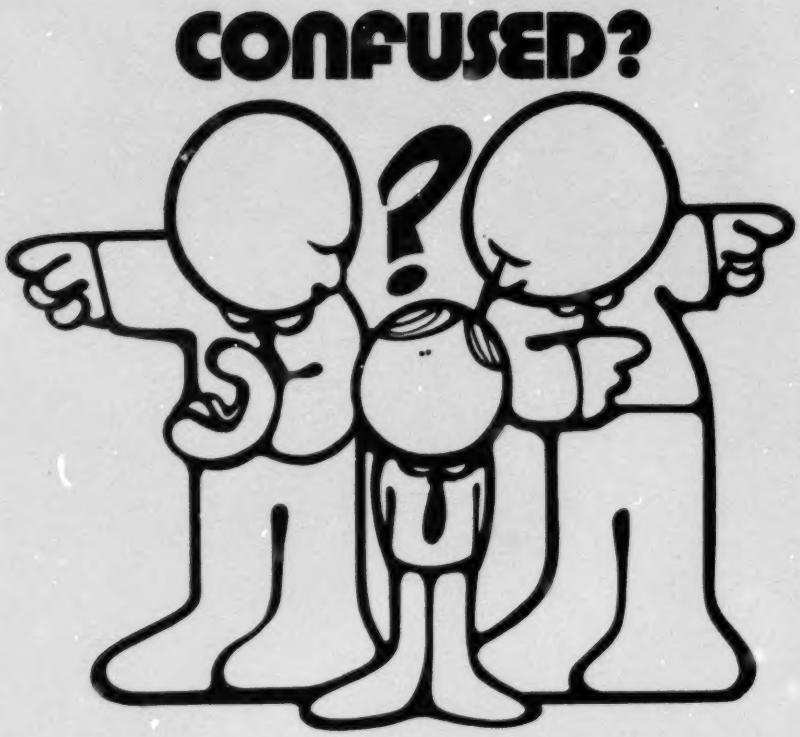
WHAT TO LOOK FOR

WHAT TO DO

SECTION II

The first three parts of Section II are largely self explanatory.

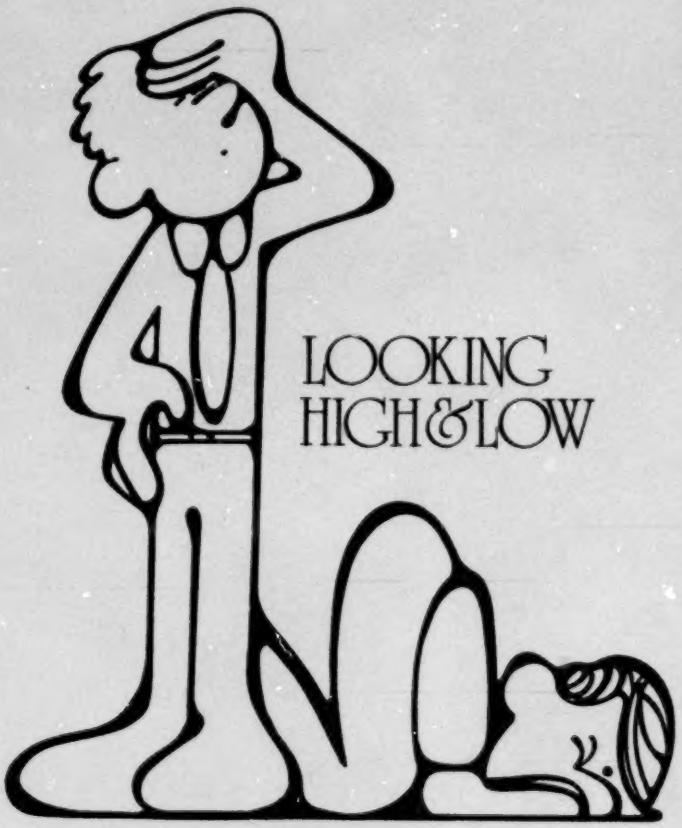
The portion, "Who to See", enumerates the persons a diagnostician may want to talk to when processing a referral. "Where to Look" deals with the information gathering process during a referral as well. The third part, "What to Look For", lists areas to consider when analyzing a student's difficulties. A limited hierarchy of academic skills is offered as a "jumping off" point for the teacher or Strategist.



WHO TO SEE

1. Teacher(s)
   Classroom teacher
   Special teachers (music, art, remedial, physical education, other)
2. Principal/Superintendent
3. Parents
4. Student
5. Resource personnel who have seen the student previously

WHERE TO LOOK



1. Cumulative Folders

   Behavior patterns
   Skills patterns

2. Classroom Observations

   1. Note pupil/pupil -- teacher/pupil interaction
   2. Written teacher observations
   3. Behavior counts
   4. Verbatim transcripts
   5. Video tape
   6. See Alternative Strategies for other ideas

3. Pupil Books/Workbooks/Worksheets

4. Request data from other agencies if pertinent (Mental Health, Social Services)

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1. Physiological Problems

   Hearing
   Vision
   General Health

2. Coordinated Learning

3. Level of Teacher Input

   Amount of direct teaching
   Amount of independent work

4. Appropriate Curriculum

   Skill level mastery

   Analyzing
   Investigating
   Assessing
   Diagnosing Skills

   Math Level Analysis

   I. Readiness
      a. Vocabulary
         beside
         under
      b. Matching
      c. Counting
         oral-sequential
         written-sequential
      d. Quantity/Symbol Correspondence
      e. Visual/Symbol Recognition
      f. Written Recall of Symbols

   II. Processes
      a. Accuracy of facts
      b. Speed! in application
      c. Vocabulary (key words)
      d. Conceptualization
      e. Generalizing to new situations (like fractions)

   Reading Level Analysis

   I. Readiness
      a. Likenesses and differences
         1. sounds
         2. symbols
         3. shapes
      b. Sequencing
      c. Classifying
      d. Language

e. Directionality
    1. left/right
    2. top/bottom

II. Phonics
    a. Sound/symbol
    b. Symbol/sound
    c. Practical application
    d. Rules

III. Writing
    a. Letter formation
    b. Reversals
    c. Directionality

IV. Spelling
    a. Symbol recognition - letter names
    b. Sequencing
    c. Memory
    d. Practical application of phonetic rules

V. Sight Word
    a. Memory - short term, long term

VI. Context (key words)

VII. Comprehension - Inferences
    a. Evaluative thinking
    b. Critical thinking
    c. Divergent thinking

SECTION II

WHAT TO DO

Over the last two years we have developed a hierarchy for introducing intervention strategies into the general classroom.

Logically enough our "What To Do" begins with suggestions requiring minimal modification of the standard classroom program. As the interventionist moves down the list the modifications required are more extensive.

Our list, while certainly not all conclusive, gives the diagnostician or the teacher a place to begin their thinking.

Prompting

The first intervention in our handout is prompting. By prompting we refer to the practice of cueing a student. A maximal prompt would be one in which the teacher actually gives the desired response. A moderate prompt is one in which student and teacher respond together, as in a dual recitation of the ABC's. A minimal prompt is one which has the teacher give the stimulus ("Say your ABC's.") and the student responds independently.

Drill

Our second intervention is drill. In this instance a student may simply need more repetition of the same skill to reach mastery. The material may be in the form of a sheet of math problems or the drill may be incorporated into a math game.

Curriculum Modification

By curriculum modification, our third intervention, we mean the altering of teacher expectancies. This might mean that the teacher requires the student to write only seven spelling words instead of the fifteen that the rest of the class is expected to do. In this way the teacher is able to modify the curriculum without totally changing the child's program. Another area of curriculum modification is getting the learner more actively involved. The teacher may supply individual slates for students to write their answers on so everyone can participate at once.

The use of concrete materials and visual aids is another form of curriculum modification.

Sequencing of content can be another curriculum modification strategy. In this case if a teacher does not like the way the math book is arranged, the strategist may help her to sequence the units into a format which allows easier assimilation by the students. Curriculum modification may mean a minor change such as pointing out the

reason for the assignment to the students involved.

Grouping Within the Classroom

Our fourth type of intervention is grouping within the classroom. If a student is observed to be disruptive in the low reading group, and yet for the first part of the period at least, he can answer the teacher's questions or even anticipate them, perhaps he's bored and needs the challenge of the middle group. Needless to say, if groups within a classroom remain fluid there will be no stigma about moving from group to group.

Taping Reading Assignments and Tests

An intervention which is particularly effective for upper grade and high school age students is taping assignments and tests. This need not be an extra burden on the teacher. There are usually parents, practicum students or others who are quite capable of taping social studies texts, tests, etc.

Room Arrangement

Room arrangement can provide an oasis of quiet for the student who is having difficulty. Such centers as math and science can provide structured places to reinforce skills.

Types of Classrooms

There are usually several types of classrooms within a building or certainly within a school system. These include the team teaching situation and the self-contained (one teacher for most subjects) room. When formulating strategies for students having difficulties such variables as style of classroom need to be considered. If there is a teacher/student personality conflict it might be appropriate to change teachers if the situation warrants it.

Tutorial Help

Tutorial help is an often suggested intervention strategy. It could be more effective than it is if instructors would follow this procedure: a) Describe for the tutor what is to be done, b) demonstrate what is to be done, c) have the tutor demonstrate what is to be done, d) if needed offer suggestions and have the tutor demonstrate again.

Stimulus Reduction

Stimulus reduction has entered the limelight with the focus on learning disabilities. However a student need not have a serious disability to be distracted by some of today's classrooms. In some rooms mobiles hang from the ceiling, children's art work is randomly displayed around the walls, there are several colorful bulletin boards, and alphabet picture cards and number cards march above the blackboards. When a child is asked to focus on the alphabet picture for "e"--is it any wonder they have difficulty separating the relevant from the irrelevant stimuli?! Decorations are great in a classroom, but should be analyzed for functional purposes periodically.

Non-textual Materials

The use of non-textual materials requires a more drastic change in the regular class program. However if the teacher is approached in the proper manner such a suggestion can be highly successful. Many teachers have a group of low achieving students whose progress is extremely slow. Why not eliminate the basal text for this group one day a week and substitute non-textual materials such as magazines, catalogs, telephone books, etc. The slow group can have a highly reinforcing experience which may foster a better attitude toward the basal presentation. The teacher does not have an extra preparation, but simply a different one.

Behavior Modification

Behavior modification has been another source of controversy for a number of years. As the reader will note in our "What To Do" section it is low on the list of alternative strategies. There are many instances in which behavior modification is a useful tool, however it is not a substitute for well thought out lesson plans and good teaching. When suggesting behavior modification to a teacher--simplest is best. Never suggest a token economy if social praise will work. An additional caution should be made regarding the use of behavior modification, when the diagnostician suggests the program a phase out section should be included. The classroom teacher is more likely to respond if they can see the program as a finite one.

Alternate Modalities

Teaching to increase or decrease the stimuli aimed at various modalities has also been a controversial area in special education. If the Strategist approaches her suggestions from a task orientation success is more likely. The teacher can see for herself that a student internalizes sight words more readily than phonetics or

vice-versa. If we remove the auditory and visual label jargon and relate our suggestions to classroom tasks the teacher will understand better and be more receptive.

Remedial and Special Class Placement

At the bottom of our list of alternative strategies are remedial placements such as Title I reading programs or SPURT programs and special education in a partial day or full day situation. These placements are low on our list because the entire orientation of the Strategist program is to keep the mildly handicapped student in the general classroom. It is our philosophy that alternatives should be fully explored and regular class programming resources exploited before any child is recommended for a program that removes him from the mainstream.

The strategies in our "What To Do" section were aimed primarily at the classroom teacher. However in our role as Strategists we also make suggestions to students and parents.

Student Strategies

Student strategies might include encouraging the student to use a marker, or to ask questions in class. Other student strategies are the use of self-checking methods in math or reading and having the student read aloud to himself.

Parent Strategies

Parent strategies suggested include increasing or decreasing expectancy levels and the assigning of home responsibilities to the student.

Parents will sometimes be asked to provide short periods of drill on specific academic tasks.

Many parent strategies take the form of giving positive reinforcement and support to a student experiencing difficulties.

Neither the classroom strategies nor the student and parent strategies will work without cooperation. Communication between home and school is an obvious prerequisite for success.

WHAT TO DO

ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES

1. Prompting
2. Drill
3. Curriculum Modification
4. Grouping Within the Classroom
5. Taping Reading Assignments and Tests
6. Room Arrangement
7. Types of Classrooms
8. Tutorial Help
9. Stimulus Reduction
10. Non-Textual Materials
11. Behavior Modification
12. Alternate Modalities
13. Remedial Class Placement
14. Resource or Special Education
    Self-Contained Placement

CASE STUDIES

HOW DOES THIS STRIKE YOU?

SECTION III

CASE STUDIES

The final section of our presentation utilized incomplete case studies. The problem and the diagnosis were stated while the participants were asked to formulate strategies using the "What To Do" hierarchy as a guide.

CASE STUDY
(4th Grade Boy)

CONCERN:

Incomplete assignments, off task behavior.

INVESTIGATION:

Cumulative folder indicates history of incomplete assignments and off task behavior.

Teacher indicates it takes student a long time to start tasks.

Teacher indicates student is kept in at recesses to complete workbook assignments and written work.

Student interview indicates a dislike for written assignments.

Testing revealed a high I.Q., above average reading skills, good math skills, poor writing skills (many letters made incorrectly).

CASE STUDY
(6th Grade Boy)

CONCERN:

Inability to attend to task for any length of time; incomplete assignments; moves around the room often disturbing others.

INVESTIGATION:

Formal and informal tests.

Skill level approximately at grade level.

Usually read test items aloud.

When required to read items silently he moved his lips and his responses were usually incorrect.

When the same test item was read aloud he corrected his reading errors and could give correct response.

Cumulative folder indicated history of incomplete assignments and non-attending.

Teacher interview revealed he could attend for short periods at a time and then moved around room.

Student interview revealed he became very frustrated in classroom and had to move away from his work.

APPENDIX

AREA EDUCATION AGENCY 7

PRE-REFERRAL SCREENING DATA -- CONFIDENTIAL

Teacher Signature: _____

STUDENT _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____ AGE ____

SEX: M F GRADE _____ SCHOOL _____ DATE COMPILED _____

READING LEVEL _____ MATH LEVEL _____

Reading Difficulties

____ Phonics
____ Comprehension
____ Reversals
____ Word Attack Skills
____ Other _____

Arithmetic Difficulties

____ Story Problems
____ Mechanics
____ Memory of Facts
____ Understanding of Concepts
____ Fatigue

Other Difficulties

____ Spelling ____ Handwriting
____ Listening ____ Speaking
____ Language Skills
____ Visual Perception
____ Perceptual/Motor

Behavioral Patterns: (check those which you feel apply)

____ Short Attention Span
____ Does not complete assign.
____ Completes assign. too quickly
____ Failure to follow directions
____ Helpful
____ Courteous
____ Withdrawn
____ Overly aggressive
____ Failure to listen
____ Uncoordinated
____ Overactive
____ Disturbs others
____ Lack of motivation
____ Out of seat behavior
____ Cooperative in large groups
____ Cooperative in small groups
____ Anxious
____ Fearful
____ Destructive
____ Oversensitive

List any specific behaviors that result from these patterns and the conditions in which they are exhibited:

_____

_____

_____

Undesirable Behavior:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Desired Behavior:

_____

_____

_____

_____

What methods have you employed in dealing with the problem:

_____

_____

List special programs in which this child has participated: (sp.ed., remedial reading, etc.)

_____

_____

List positive behaviors that you have observed:

_____

_____

Attach any significant classroom work you feel would be illustrative of child's problem.
(Use back for other comments)